

[BEGIN AUDIO]

INTERVIEWER: Albert, we are going to go back to the beginning of this story with you and try to put together some of the facets of how this Pearl Harbor attack affected you and your career in the Navy. Where were you originally born, raised rather, born and raised?

ALBERT: I was born in Portland, Oregon, raised in Portland, Oregon, went to high school in Portland, Oregon, and joined the Naval Reserve in Portland, Oregon.

INTERVIEWER: And what year were you born?

ALBERT: 1923 so I am 64 now.

INTERVIEWER: How did the depression, before when we interviewed someone, Mr. Goings, he mentioned that the depression had a big affect on his life. Did it affect people in Portland?

ALBERT: Ah, it affected them. Yes but I was in school so I thought nothing of it. It was a natural chain of events as far as I was concerned.

INTERVIEWER: How did you come about joining the Naval Reserve?

ALBERT: Well, I thought that I should belong to the Reserve. In fact, I wanted to be a Navy man from the time that I can remember and my folks didn't want it. But I talked to my dad here and my mother here and by the time that I got through talking to one and getting permission from one, I said my dad he says no just talk to your mother and so I talked to my mother and I says dad says its alright. You can go ahead and sign the papers. I was seventeen then you had to have your papers signed if you wanted to go in so she didn't know that dad didn't say anything but anyway she signed the papers and before she could do anything I had them down to the Navy Reserve and got sworn in.

INTERVIEWER: And what were some of the things that the Navy Reserve required of you during those times?

ALBERT: Well, it was weekly meetings and what I looked forward to was, supposedly the yearly cruise. It came out that you could go aboard ship for one year and then go back and finish your college or high school whatever.

INTERVIEWER: And what year was this that you joined the Naval Reserves?

ALBERT: First part of 40.

INTERVIEWER: First part of 1940.

ALBERT: Yes, and the minute the years option came up why

INTERVIEWER: For the cruise?

ALBERT: For the cruise. Battle ship and I thought that would be wonderful so I immediately volunteered for it.

INTERVIEWER: And what battleship did they select for you?

ALBERT: My orders were to go to **[PH]** Bremerton, Washington and stand by to pick up the Battleship, Oklahoma. So that's where I met the USS Oklahoma.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the month or the year of that? 1941?

ALBERT: 1940

INTERVIEWER: 1940

ALBERT: It was about August of 40. So I got aboard the USS Oklahoma while she was in dry dock in Bremerton and from there on why I learned to be a battleship sailor.

INTERVIEWER: What was your rating aboard the ship?

ALBERT: I went aboard as a Seaman 2nd.

INTERVIEWER: What was the ship's crew like?

ALBERT: Well, the ships crews were old timers. They were all the best parts of them were Asiatic sailors that had transferred out of Asiatic fleet back into the Pacific fleet. And the Oklahoma was the only ship that they took the Asiatic sailors back to. They were very feisty. You would look at them crossways and they would want to fight. They had some real characters on the Oklahoma.

INTERVIEWER: Now were these also fellows that were prone to like to have a good time in town? Go in and drink.

ALBERT: Some of them liked to go in town, have a good time, and climb up the gangway.

INTERVIEWER: On the way back?

ALBERT: On the way back. Maybe two or three of the topside sailors would take them down, put them in their bunks. We had a bugler on board that every time he came back pretty well loaded why he would grab the bugle and flip over all the PA system switches and play Reveille at 2:00 am in the morning. He was always on report.

INTERVIEWER: Always before the caption's mass.

ALBERT: Always. We had a number of characters on the Oklahoma, probably more than any other battleship because they were Asiatics.

INTERVIEWER: When you left Bremerton I understand there was an incident with the ship? What was that incident?

ALBERT: Well, we left Bremerton to go out on sea trials after coming out of dry-dock. And it was very foggy and in those days there was no such thing as radar so I was a, what they call a striker on the wheel. It wasn't a wheel on the bridge. It was more like a controller box on an old street car.

INTERVIEWER: That's how the ship was steered?

ALBERT: Yeah and I was learning how to steer and all of a sudden we hit a very, very large bang and the officer on deck says, "All stop, back full" and "All stop" again and we look down in the water and here are freight cars all over in the water with bumps sitting on top of them. So they used to move the freight cars in Puget Sound from one point to another on big barges. So we have it in our records that we sunk the only freight train in the Navy.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of damage did the ship sustain?

ALBERT: It sustained a small amount. I think we were back in dry-dock for about two days.

INTERVIEWER: Was anybody hurt on the freight cars?

ALBERT: I really couldn't tell you whether they were hurt or not, probably scared the hell out of them. But from there we went on down to Long Beach and Long Beach over to the Islands.

INTERVIEWER: For fleet maneuvers?

ALBERT: For fleet maneuvers.

INTERVIEWER: And were you starting to get the feel of the ship?

ALBERT: Oh, yea. It was a good ship. When I went aboard I was a seaman in second division.

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: So.

INTERVIEWER: What were your duties? What were your jobs? I mean battle station, workstations?

ALBERT: Battle station at that particular time I was a range finder. on trip three.

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: [PH] On trip three.

INTERVIEWER: Would that change?

ALBERT: Sometimes, yeah. They would change your battle stations around. But after I get into the Quartermaster gang why my battle station was [INDISCERNABLE].

INTERVIEWER: And that's where you were on December 7th?

ALBERT: That is where I was. Yep.

INTERVIEWER: What was your work station when you arrived on the Hawaiian Islands?

ALBERT: Well my work station when I joined the Quartermaster Gang was the Port Bridge.

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: And you had to keep that nice and clean and painted up and the linoleum polished nice pretty red.

INTERVIEWER: Linoleum was red on the ship?

ALBERT: Oh, yes. And later they found that linoleum was very dangerous and very flammable. So they didn't use it during the war.

INTERVIEWER: Give me your impressions when you arrived in the Hawaiian Islands. What was it like? I mean you had never been to the Hawaiian Islands before?

ALBERT: No. No. So we came in and the first liberty a couple of us decided to see what Waikiki was like?

INTERVIEWER: And what was Waikiki like?

ALBERT: At that particular time, Waikiki was practically null and void. The **[PH]** Alamowana was there and the Royal Hawaiian and a few old buildings on the land side. There was a street car that used to run out there.

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: So we decided we had to swim at Waikiki and about 10:00 one night we got in the bushes along side the **[PH]** Alamowana and having no swimsuit so we skinny dipped along side the **[PH]** Alamowana Hotel at 10:00 at night just to make sure that we swam at Waikiki.

INTERVIEWER: So that's the one we know as the **[PH]** Mawana Hotel, right? **[PH]** Mawana Hotel?

ALBERT: That's right it used to be known as the **[PH]** Alamowana.

INTERVIEWER: So you were out there skinny-dipping one night, right?

ALBERT: That's right. But I understand the Police would look not look kindly on it today.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I think some of that still goes on up there. And once you were here, now you were in Pearl Harbor and fleet maneuvers were going on, I understand that there was incident with a donkey?

ALBERT: Well, the Navy would give you R and R which was actually a long, long weekend.

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: And they had barracks of a sort set up out at **[PH]** Nanakooley. From Dole pineapple out to **[PH]** Nanakooley they used to run a little railroad, a little steam engine and some cars. We would swim at **[PH]** Nanakooley and when we came back we saw a donkey wandering around in the field, decided the donkey **[INDISCERNABLE]** got the donkey on the train and when we got off at Dole to go back to the ship. We left the donkey on the train. The whole ship heard about that. So we had fun.

INTERVIEWER: As 1940 progressed to 1941, your year is coming to an end.

ALBERT: Yeah. We were just about at the end of our year's tour.

INTERVIEWER: Were you there with other reservists aboard ship?

ALBERT: Oh yes there was 13 of us onboard.

INTERVIEWER: 13.

ALBERT: Out of the Portland reserve. So that morning they said all the particular reserves they named us **[PH]** lay down to the office and get your, sign up for your travel transportation back to the states.

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: So we went down to sign our names very happy to get off the ship. Needless to say after a year serving with Asiatic sailors and so on why yes we wanted to go back into the Reserves again.

INTERVIEWER: When was this done? When did you sign this paper? Just before the attack?

ALBERT: No, no. This was the same day that they declared a National Emergency and froze everybody. And after we signed it at, about three hours later, why they called us all back down and said, "It's a national emergency, everybody is frozen in their position and you're going to stay aboard the Oklahoma till the National Emergency is over."

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel?

ALBERT: Mad.

INTERVIEWER: You were looking forward to going home?

ALBERT: I was looking forward to going back to the Reserve Fleet.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know how many months before Pearl Harbor this was?

ALBERT: This was about four months.

INTERVIEWER: Four months.

ALBERT: And the minute they declared National Emergency when you sent to sea you went in darkened condition and you were you might say in a battle condition.

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: And all the time you were at sea you stayed in that, darkened ship in an emergency position.

INTERVIEWER: Now you went out with fleet maneuvers, the fleet was quite active during that time.

ALBERT: Very active.

INTERVIEWER: And I understand that you worked, your ship worked a lot with the Arizona.

ALBERT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Was there, there have been stories about a collision that occurred shortly before the attack? Did you witness that or know much about that?

ALBERT: No, I felt it.

INTERVIEWER: You felt it. What actually happened? Did you find out later?

ALBERT: Ah, well the flag gave maneuvering orders.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ALBERT: And some of those maneuvering orders were a little vague and left a lot to be desired as to who goes where and who goes when? What happened basically was that the orders were misinterpreted and as a result why they collided.

INTERVIEWER: Where did they collide? Do you know?

ALBERT: As I remember they collided ah a little forward of mid ships.

INTERVIEWER: And then they came back in here to get repaired?

ALBERT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Who was damaged more severely? The Arizona?

ALBERT: I think it was a tossup.

INTERVIEWER: A tossup. Was there words exchanged between the two crews about that?

ALBERT: I wasn't in position to know about that but I heard later that they were swearing at each other across the water. as they came away from each other.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's take you right up to the events of December 7th. Can you describe to me the night before Pearl Harbor? What you were doing and were you on liberty or?

ALBERT: Yes, I had been in Honolulu and just bought some tailor-mades whites

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: [INDISCERNABLE] whites. And I bought a Christmas present for my fiancée at that time and came back and saw the show on the base, on the ship rather.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what movie they were showing that night?

ALBERT: No.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a western?

ALBERT: I can't remember what it was.

INTERVIEWER: And where were movies shown on ship?

ALBERT: On the stern.

INTERVIEWER: On the stern. They had a movie production house there?

ALBERT: No, they had sort of a projection area up on top of the **[PH]** turret floor.

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

ALBERT: And the screen was clear on the stern.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

ALBERT: Rain or shine they show the pictures. So if you got tired of it you went below and got in your bunk and went to sleep. And I got up the next morning very early. I guess it was about, Sunday morning, I guess I got up about 5:00 and I was on the wrestling team so I got the boat over to IEN and worked out and came back, had breakfast, went down and got my bucket of hot water. And they had no such thing as hot water in the cruise quarters. If you wanted hot water, everybody had a bucket and you got your water and then stuck your steam spigot into your water, turned it on to get hot water. Heat your own water.

INTERVIEWER: Ah huh.

ALBERT: Then you would take it down to your quarters and shave and wash your teeth and so on. So I took my bucket of water down and after stirring and hung it on the peg in front of the mirror. And about that time, while General Quarters alarms went and everybody started moaning and groaning that this is a hell of a time to have General Quarters exercise on a Sunday morning. And the captain we had who had just taken over command was really wild on all of these exercises at any time of the day or night.

INTERVIEWER: So when it initially happened you thought it was another drill.

ALBERT: We just thought it was another drill.

INTERVIEWER: And drills were quite common on the ship.

ALBERT: Very common. And the officer on deck who's name was **[PH]** Kimmel, he says, "This is a real attack, the Japs are attacking us, this is real, no shit!"

INTERVIEWER: That came over the PA.

ALBERT: This came over the PA and about that time everybody went into high gear and took off.

INTERVIEWER: And where did you go at that moment?

ALBERT: Well we got a hold of the, we were armored plated around after steering so we shut down the armor plated hatch which was about oh, 8 inches thick and dogged all the hatches down and I got on the sound power phone and about that time I figured well what the heck I just turned it around a little bit and started going back to shaving. And I didn't think anything. You know what was going to happen and all of a sudden the first torpedo hit and the bucket went up in the air and that ended everything and we went to war.

INTERVIEWER: So despite even that PA announcement that General Quarters you thought it was still a drill.

ALBERT: No I didn't think it was a drill but I thought well, nobody can get us. We got blistered voids on the side that will take care of their torpedoes if they come and we got top steel and we're in pretty good shape.

INTERVIEWER: When did you realize you weren't in good shape?

ALBERT: About the tilt.

INTERVIEWER: You could feel that list?

ALBERT: Oh, yeah, you could feel it immediately! But see Monday we were to start material and personnel inspection, the annual inspections. As a result all of the hatches were open.

INTERVIEWER: So all your voids were open.

ALBERT: Everything. The void along side of us was open. We slammed that shut when we went to battle station. We dogged everything down. We had an inspection

hole and a [PH] lister void right behind the electrician's cage or the electrical cage. And the battle lanterns or the lights stayed on for a little while and then they went off.

INTERVIEWER: You had your sound phones while all this was going on. Were you communicating with anybody at this time?

ALBERT: All I could hear was the various departments going to a state of readiness.

INTERVIEWER: Anybody saying anything? Giving you an idea of what is going on, on the ship?

ALBERT: No. After that, why you could hear them start to yell in various parts of the ship because you were connected to the whole ship basically and up the bridge but you could hear them yell and sometimes you would hear screams and then they would go dead in certain areas. But you knew where the problem was by who was still answering up. And then pretty soon nobody answered up. And that was about the time when we were listed 90 degrees and the air vent that we had going in to our quarters from the main deck had buckled so it could not be shut. As a result the water started coming in and it was greasy, oily water. We started using pants, shirts, bedding, blankets, mattresses, everything to shove into the air vent to keep the water from coming in. We had one guy I won't name but he had a pretty good wide hind end on him so it fit the air vent so we used him to shut the water off until we could get mattresses in place and tie them off. He didn't like that very much. But we had our battle lanterns on by then and we had four flashlights which we used until they ran out. But the whole idea was to slow the water down if we could.

INTERVIEWER: So in order that you literally used a human being to try and stop the water from coming in.

ALBERT: Hm hm.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like in there? Were you just going about it just efficiently not thinking about what's happening or no panic had set in at that point?

ALBERT: Some of the guys were yelling and getting a little upset but as far as I was concerned all I could think of was slowing the water down.

INTERVIEWER: At what moment or was there ever a moment that you thought I'm not going to make it out of this?

ALBERT: Well, no I never thought that.

INTERVIEWER: You always had pretty positive.

ALBERT: I figured that someplace along the line, something would happen if we would just hang on long enough. And finally we started tapping out a SOS and we were qualified as far as code was concerned because that was part of our job, Quartermaster Division.

INTERVIEWER: When did you figure out the ship had turned over or did you ever get it?

ALBERT: Oh, we knew it turned over we were walking over the [PH] bull kits.

INTERVIEWER: And what was above you?

ALBERT: By the time it ended up the, what was the deck was above us.

INTERVIEWER: That must have been a terrible feeling of disorientation.

ALBERT: When it is dark and you can't see, then you're not disoriented like when you can see things.

INTERVIEWER: So it was pitch black in there.

ALBERT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: How many guys were in there?

ALBERT: There was eight of us all together.

INTERVIEWER: Did all eight survive?

ALBERT: Oh, yea.

INTERVIEWER: So, when did you realize that the attack was over? Or did you?

ALBERT: When they answered our tapping and we talked to them outside. They asked us where we were. We told them after steering.

INTERVIEWER: Can you kind of give me an idea of the scene of individuals you say some were excited and what was your demeanor during all of this?

ALBERT: Well, like I said, when everybody else gets excited I get real cool and cold. So it might bother a lot of people but I figure my chances are a lot better if I can think things out. And I guess that's what happened because when they got in to the [PH] blisterode they told us to take the plug off. I did. I had all of the dogs off on the hatch which is only about this big around, just big enough for a man to go through.

INTERVIEWER: Ah ha.

ALBERT: And the minute that the air pressure got evened out, why we dropped the hatch away and I started pushing the men out and just as I got ready to go out, one yard workman I guess he was yard workman, he had a big lantern he says, "Hold it right there I want to hunt for dead bodies." And he flashed the light into the compartment or what was left of the compartment because there was only about that much room between the water and the overhead.

INTERVIEWER: Did the water rise during that time or was the water that?

ALBERT: No, it kept coming up very slowly.

INTERVIEWER: But it was coming up all the time when you were in there.

ALBERT: All the time. When the light was shining in, all I could see on the oil water was an old grapefruit. And that's the one main thing I can remember was a grapefruit floating around on the oily water.

INTERVIEWER: So there was nobody else in there?

ALBERT: There was nobody else and I told the guy, I said, "The hell with this, I want out." So I got out of there and then they passed us through the holes that they had cut and in order to protect everybody they had rags and blankets and everything else over the sharp edges of the steel on the holes. And right before, well, in fact, the last hole through before going out onto the hull I got a cut on my back and then they got

us out on the hull and they wrapped us in a blanket and put an old WW1 tin helmet on us and put us in a forty-foot motor boat.

INTERVIEWER: Was it day or night then?

ALBERT: Night. I told one of the guys, I says, “Jesus this day went by awful fast. It’s Sunday night, good time.” He said, “No, Monday night”. And he pulled a newspaper out of his back pocket and he showed me it was Monday night. They took us from there over to the USS Solace.

INTERVIEWER: Was the Arizona still burning?

ALBERT: No, it was not burning then.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get a chance to even look around you or was it too dark?

ALBERT: No, it was almost by then it was real dark.

INTERVIEWER: What were your feelings when you came out of that ship?

ALBERT: Just damn glad to be out. But a, mad.

INTERVIEWER: How about the other fellows?

ALBERT: I guess they probably **[INDISCERNABLE]**

INTERVIEWER: Was their praying, crying, all of those emotions that we would think would go on in such a tight situation down there?

ALBERT: To a degree. But not as much as you would think there would be.

INTERVIEWER: You have your own thoughts going on.

ALBERT: Yeah, everybody’s got their own thoughts and they’re sort of wrapped up in them.

INTERVIEWER: What were your thoughts down there? What were you thinking about?

ALBERT: Well, I just wanted to get out and stay alive.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think about your family down there?

ALBERT: You think of everything. Nothing goes unnoticed. I mean you think of everything from the time you are a little kid right on up till day one.

INTERVIEWER: You say you were mad too when you came out? What were you mad about?

ALBERT: Mad about what happened. What should not have happened! We went out to sea. We were in a, you might say almost on a war footing. We were blacked out. We went to quarters so on. I guess they felt that the minute that they came inside Pearl Harbor that nobody could touch us. And, they always said such and such a day is going to be material and personnel inspection, everything is going to be open and this is a whole fleet. And to my way of thinking, they advertised to everybody that had a weak spot. All they had to do was hit it and they hit it.

INTERVIEWER: What is your feeling now that 46 years have passed and you have had so much time to think about that, people have talked to you about it, you have shared these thoughts with your family, and now here we are 46 years later, how do you feel about 1. Pearl Harbor and 2. How do you feel about the enemy that came here and now no longer the enemy but the Japanese, what's your feeling about them?

ALBERT: Well, people that are in command today don't think like the officers that were in command then. Then they thought they were invincible, nobody would hit them, and nobody would shoot at them or anything else. They could do no wrong. This is what they were taught. If they went to Annapolis or wherever they went, West Point, they were almost given the feeling that they were you know God and they could command and they could do what they damned well wanted to do and get away with it. And that's what happened and that's the reason they got hit.

INTERVIEWER: How about the Japanese? How do you feel about them after 46 years?

ALBERT: Ah, I'm still, ah, I still have my own feelings about it but ah, there again the people that are coming over here, hell they weren't even born. Most of them weren't even born when this happened.

INTERVIEWER: They're the baby boomers like myself.

ALBERT: That's right so what they are seeing is what their parents did but you can't hold it against them. You have to hold it against the military organization in Japan that started it all.

INTERVIEWER: Which was destroyed at the end of World War II.

ALBERT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: If there was one message that you wanted to leave with people that will look at this interview and remember what happened to you. What is that theme that you would like to leave with them?

ALBERT: Well, always, always, make sure that no one is going to hit you again.

INTERVIEWER: Be alert.

ALBERT: Always be alert.

INTERVIEWER: Vigilant.

ALBERT: Well, if somebody is going to be vigilant it better be us.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I would like to thank you for this interview and I have interviewed a number of Oklahoma people. It seems that the ship was a proud ship.

ALBERT: She was.

INTERVIEWER: And she will be forever remembered for what happened here and in a sense when the Oklahoma was taken back and was going to be scrapped, it's almost poetic that she will sink before she hits a scrap yard. Have you ever thought about that?

ALBERT: Oh, yeah. We and the association all say that she was too proud to hit the scrap yard. She sunk herself and she darn near took 2 tugs with her.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. Thank you very much Al.

ALBERT: Ok, thank you.

[END AUDIO]

